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Approach and Methodology

Summary of Inserts for EAC Poll-Worker Guidebook

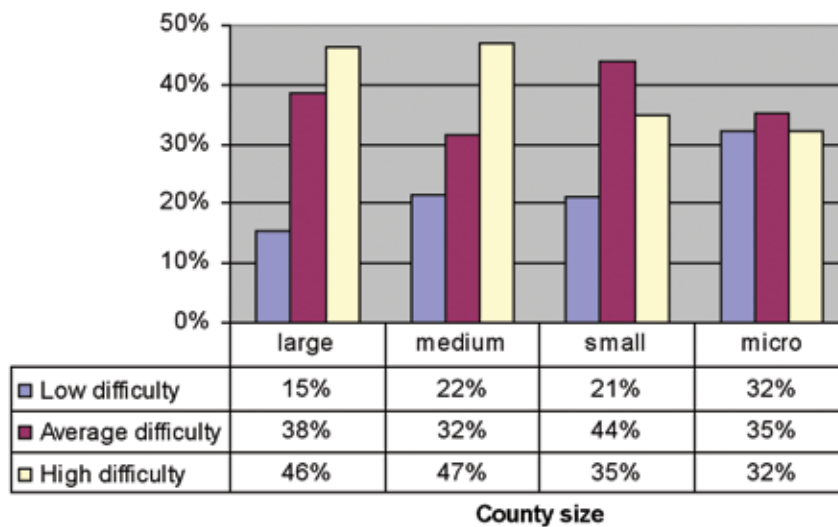


Elections depend on poll workers. They cannot operate without the army of citizen volunteers willing to staff the polls every Election Day.

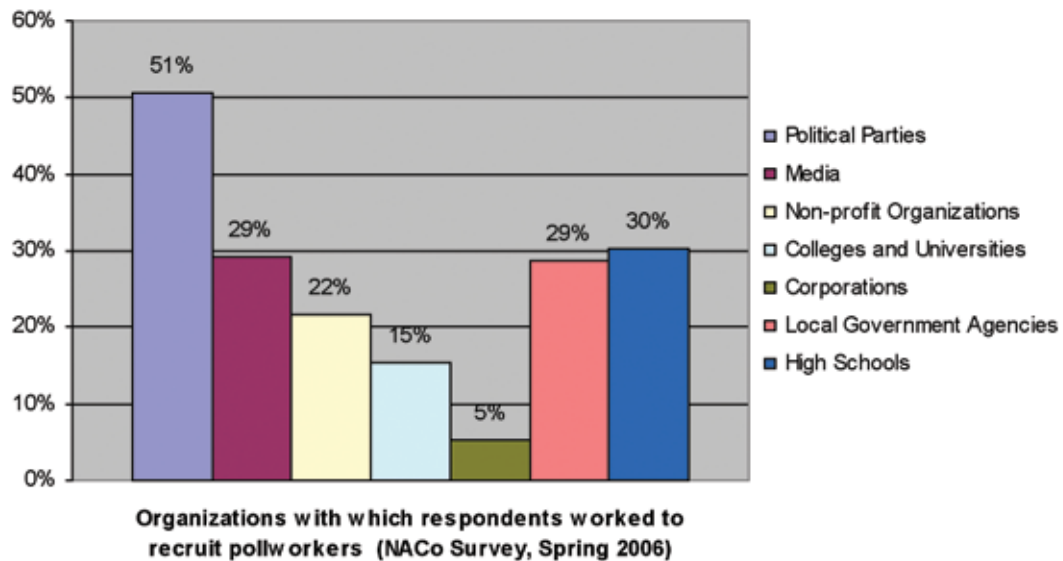
Recruiting poll workers remains a challenge, though. According to a 2006 survey conducted by the National Association of Counties (NACo), 56 percent reported that they were unable to fully staff the polls in the last presidential election.

In addition, election officials need poll workers with different skills. Under the Voting Rights Act of 1963, for example, many jurisdictions require bilingual poll workers due to growing numbers of naturalized citizens for whom English is a second language. Since the passage of the Help America Vote Act of 2002, officials value poll workers who are comfortable with new technology, such as

Percentage of respondents who indicated high/low levels of difficulty recruiting pollworkers (Results of National Association of Counties Survey, Spring 2006)



"Specialty Recruiting" (Recruiting through Intermediaries)



touch-screen voting systems and electronic poll books. As many elections become closer calls, officials also need poll workers who can implement increased documenting and security procedures. Following the 2000 election and the passage of the Help America Vote Act, demands upon poll-worker performance have increased.

Traditionally, poll workers have been recruited on a one-by-one basis. The authors of this guidebook recommend partnering with intermediary organizations to recruit poll workers. One county is able to recruit 800 of its 4,000 poll workers by partnering with local businesses. Another county recruits two-thirds of its poll workers through intermediaries, a process called Specialty Recruiting. Such strategies can be part of a long-term poll-worker recruiting strategy. Election officials develop long-term relationships with groups that provide workers, rather than relying solely on short-term connections to individual workers.

Since election officials only have so much time and money to spend on poll-worker recruitment, it is important to track those recruiting efforts which yield the most and best poll workers.

Election officials who track the results of their poll-worker recruitment efforts cite three benefits:

- Determines which recruitment tactics are most cost-effective and make a strong case for decision-makers to provide the resources to use that tactic.
- Identifies sources of poll workers who possess the skills and background that are most needed in our changing election environment.
- Analyzes the long-term effectiveness and quality of poll workers brought in by different methods.

Some jurisdictions code their poll-worker application forms to keep track of where applicants got them. Forms given out at public events have one code; sign-up sheets or applications given out on Election Day have another code; online applications have yet another code. These codes are entered into

the applicant's file. Some jurisdictions use poll-worker management software, but a simple Excel or Access database can add a field in the poll worker's record with the code indicating how he or she was recruited.

Track the percentage of poll-workers recruited as a result of each recruiting effort. Election officials will want to keep the descriptions uniform so they can be compiled easily. For instance, if one staff member inputs "Recruited at Democratic Central Committee meeting" and another inputs "DCCC", it may be more difficult to compile. Consider using drop-down boxes such as:

- *Already on File / Experienced PWs (Source not known)*
- *Democratic Party Event*
- *College Poll Worker*
- *County Poll Worker*
- *High School Poll Worker*
- *Newspaper ad (earned)*
- *Newspaper Ad (paid)*
- *Radio Ad (earned)*
- *Radio Ad (paid)*
- *Referral from Current PW*
- *Registration/Recruiting Postcard Mass Mailing*
- *Republican Party Event*
- *Targeted Letter to Individual Voters or Households*

Section 5: Sample: #1 Drop-Down List used to Code Poll Workers by Source, Los Angeles County, CA

The General Public

In This Chapter:

- **Tips to Improve Poll-Worker Recruitment Program**
- **Recruitment Messages that Really Motivate Potential Poll Workers**
- **Printed Materials for Your Recruitment Drive**
- **Common Outreach Tools**
- **Other Recruitment Ideas**

Which messages work to recruit poll workers? Which messages work to recruit the best poll workers? And how can you get these messages to the right audience? Thanks to focus groups conducted by the League of Women Voters' Education Fund in 2006, we have some answers.

Consider the following when you are planning a recruitment effort:

- The public has limited knowledge about how polling places operate – many people may not realize that they can serve as poll workers. The first step is to let people know there is a need and that they are eligible to serve.
- An in-person request will be more effective than a broadcast message, but it's also far more labor-intensive. And a targeted request made to a voter in the neighborhood where poll workers are needed is even more effective.
- Because recruiting is labor-intensive and because the need for poll workers with different skills is increasing, keeping track of recruiting methods is extremely important. You need to know which methods are really bringing in poll workers who meet your needs.

This chapter describes the most common practices used by election officials across the U.S. to bring in potential poll workers. Your challenge will be to put these practices to the test, and to use them strategically to meet the concerns addressed above.

Tips to Improve Your Poll-Worker Recruiting Program

Be specific. When you are developing your message, be specific about what your needs are. Whether you are drafting a recruitment letter or a press release, include specifics such as “26 people are needed to serve in the



“One of the major misconceptions I had was, I thought the poll worker worked for the government - that they were sent here by the President - to ensure that I could cast my vote and they’re not - they’re average people like my parents who volunteer and give their time so that everyone else can vote.”

Chari Burke, Deputy Clerk of Court Administration, Marion County, Indiana, as stated in the “By the People” movie.

Lake Ridge Community” or “57 technology-savvy voters are needed to serve in Ward 6.” Citing a specific need lends a sense of urgency to your request.

Target Your audience. A general PSA or advertisement may not yield as many responses as an article about the need for poll workers in a newsletter for retired teachers or retired government employees. If you need more Republican poll workers in Precinct 79-005A, consider sending a targeted mailing to Republican voters in that precinct, call Republican voters in that precinct, or meet with political party leaders and ask for their assistance in staffing the polling place.

Use your website. If your office has a website, make sure to post a highly visible notice about the need for poll workers. Any internet-based recruitment effort will bring you poll workers who are comfortable with computer technology.

Create checklists and follow up on each and every lead. Keep track of who called and make sure that they were either placed on a team or placed on a stand-by list. Keep track of people whom you were not able to place, and why. This will help you later to know which recruiting efforts led to placing people on teams, and which led to lists of non-placeable people.

Be prepared. When recruiting, make sure that you have the capacity to respond to every potential applicant who calls your office. The last thing you want is for applicants to call and not be able to get through to the right person, or to leave a message that is never returned. If you do not have sufficient staff to handle a high volume of calls, be sure that an answering machine or voice mail picks up when the phone line is busy. Callers can also be directed to the website to apply on-line.

Talk with other election officials. You can gain a wealth of information from other professionals who are facing the same challenges. Compare notes on what worked and what didn't. Share information on the stipend amounts that you pay your poll workers. Reach out to jurisdictions with a similar number of voters or a similar voter demographic to share similar successes, challenges and solutions. For example, large urban counties and cities will have challenges similar to other large urban counties and cities.

Recruitment Messages that Motivate Poll Workers

Many election officials remember the days when they could simply appeal to a sense of civic duty to recruit all the poll workers they needed.



Sample Checklist:

- *Have we called every poll worker who served in that precinct in recent history?*
- *Have we called every poll worker who served in a neighboring precinct in recent history?*
- *Have we called the people who signed up to serve at their polling place in past elections?*
- *Have we worked all of the voter registration forms, calls from ads, and responses from recruiting messages in sample ballots and other election materials?*
- *Have we mailed a recruiting postcard to targeted voters in especially hard-to-recruit neighborhoods?*

Recent research suggests that appeals to “participate in democracy in action” may motivate many voters, but perhaps not enough people to adequately staff the polls, or not enough technology-friendly, energetic, diverse people whom you need in your jurisdiction to serve as poll workers.

When the League of Women Voters tested recruitment messages in focus groups held around the country in the spring of 2006 with members of the general public, people were drawn to the following messages:

- **“Serving as a poll worker is fun!”** Election officials report that longtime poll workers serve again and again because they enjoy it. Most poll workers enjoy working with neighbors, sharing a potluck meal, and getting acquainted with neighbors. (Be careful not to oversell this message. Sitting in a garage or chilly school cafeteria for 12 hours is actually not much fun, so be sure to provide tips to poll workers on preparing for the long day, such as bringing snacks and sweaters. Your poll workers will appreciate the heads-up.)
- **“You can serve your community” or “Your community needs x number of poll workers....”** People respond more positively to a specific need in their community.
- **“You will be PAID!”** Some potential poll workers will be swayed by the promise of payment. Some poll workers see the volunteer stipend as “a little extra pocket money,” and others use it to help pay the rent.

When you are developing your messages, remember that most people know nothing about polling-place operations; you will need to teach them. In addition, consider bringing in groups from different demographic groups — young professional voters, bilingual voters, and low-income voters — to learn what might motivate them to serve.

Printed Materials for Your Recruitment Drive

The Application Form

Create a poll-worker application form. The form should include all information you need about the applicant, including name, address, home phone, work phone, email address, precinct, party affiliation, whether or not applicant is willing to serve in any precinct in the jurisdiction, language fluency, and any relevant physical handicaps or potential legal conflicts, such as employment in the office of an elected official.

The application form should:

- *Fit on one page*
- *Be clear*
- *Leave enough room for the applicant’s responses*
- *Be easily duplicated and adapted to fit in to a brochure or flyer*
- *Include information on where to return the completed application or where to access the form online*

Tips:

- *If the application is a stand-alone flyer, consider turning the reverse side into a self mailer. Or consider combining the recruiting message with another purpose such as a voter registration mailing.*
- *Applications can also be used as a screening tool, providing an opportunity to evaluate the applicant’s literacy.*

Section 5: #2 LA County's "World of Difference" application
Section 5: #3: Harris County Texas application/brochure
combo

Brochures and Flyers

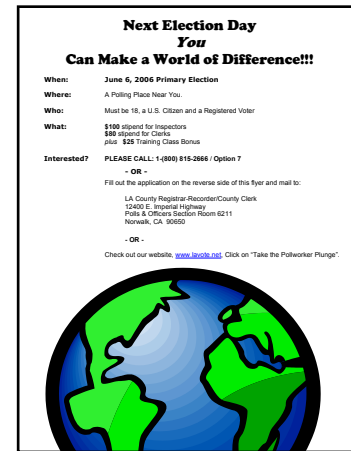
Brochures and flyers are important for community outreach. If done well, they can be an effective education and recruitment tool.

What you'll need:

- Someone to design the brochure/flyer
- A print shop (or a company that will donate the print job)
- A distribution plan. Consider placing the brochures or flyers in high-traffic places such as grocery stores, libraries and temporary employment agencies. This can be a low-maintenance way to give you access to many new potential poll workers. Be sure to place the brochures and flyers at community outlets where you have identified a particular need for poll workers.
- Target the message for your jurisdiction. Once you have discovered what messages work for your jurisdiction — a specific community need, the stipend, or the fun of being part of Election Day — you can incorporate the messages into all printed materials.
- Also include information for the applicants about what will be required of them. This can include a requirement to attend training before Election Day, and the hours they will serve on Election Day.

Tips for Creating Eye-Catching Recruiting Materials:

- Create a title for the brochure, flyer or program. Examples of messages in use:
 - "Help Carry the Torch. Be a Poll Worker" – National Association of Secretaries of State
 - "Champions of Democracy" — Franklin County, OH
 - "Promote Democracy: Poll Workers Needed!"
 - "Help Deliver Democracy and Make Money Doing It!"
 - "Celebrate Your Freedom: Become a Harris County Poll Worker!" — Harris County, Texas
 - "Serve Your County: Be an Election Judge"



- Change the pitch from the standard “Poll Workers Needed!” to one that lets people know how many workers are needed on Election Day, where they are needed, and short explanations of what they will be doing.
- Use off-the-shelf publishing software to create your own design.
- Use your jurisdiction’s print shop to save on printing costs.
- Get a business or organization to donate the printing.
- Recruit a graphic artist (or graphic art student) to design your promotional materials.
- Challenge a high school art class to develop your materials.
- Ask state/county/municipal departments and community organizations to distribute your materials with their mailings.
- Consider whether or not to specify dates. Including specific dates means the flyer or brochure will quickly become outdated; however, not including specific dates lessens the urgency for the reader to call.
- Consider using two-color printing to make the materials more appealing, though this can increase costs.

Section 5: #4: Johnson County, Kansas fact flyer

Section 5: #5: Johnson County or Nevada County eagle/patriotic

Section 5: #6: King County “Help Deliver Dem” 11 x 17

Section 5: #7: Cuyahoga “Remember” flyer

Section 5: #8: Missouri/Truman poster

Section 5: #9: NASS “Help Carry the Torch”

Common Outreach Tools to Take to the Next Level

Word-of-Mouth Recruitment

Word-of-mouth recruitment is the simplest technique: Ask people in person if they would like to serve as poll workers. Many election officials from smaller jurisdictions say this method is the only method they need.

You can maximize your effort by mobilizing networks of people to help you recruit.

- Encourage current poll workers to recruit additional workers.
- Get on the agenda at local service and social organizations, such as local women’s clubs and Kiwanis Clubs.
- Invite poll workers to bring a friend to training. Give a special incentive to those who bring a friend who signs up.

Tips and Adaptations for Your Jurisdiction’s Flyers and Brochures:

- *If possible, adapt the flyers or brochures to specific communities. Create versions of the flyer or brochures in other languages. Consider creating one version in large font print for potential poll workers with visual impairments.*
- *Code the brochure and flyers so you know where they were placed. When volunteers call to inquire about serving, ask them to give the code.*



There are some disadvantages, however...

- Word-of-mouth recruitment can be time- and labor-intensive. And risky, in that the people you ask may not ultimately be willing to go where poll workers are needed.
- In addition, word-of-mouth recruitment cannot help you reach a more diverse pool of poll workers than you already have. Use word-of-mouth recruitment if you are content with the demographics of your poll workers – age, gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, neighborhood representation, etc.
- Recruiting poll workers through social networks works in jurisdictions of all sizes, but seems to be most effective in small communities.



Community Outreach Committees

Create an outreach committee that regularly brings together community leaders and activists to discuss election-related issues, identify new sources of poll workers, and provide feedback on the conduct of elections.

Committees can include representatives of:

- Accessibility organizations, (e.g. Center for Independent Living, local American Federation of the Blind chapter)
- Chambers of Commerce or business associations
- Churches
- Cultural organizations
- Political parties
- Service organizations (e.g. Rotary Club, Kiwanis)
- Unions and associations (e.g. AAUW, retired teacher associations, college alumni organizations)
- Voter education organizations (e.g. League of Women Voters, NAACP, NALEO, APALC)
- Women's groups (e.g. Junior League)
- Youth groups (e.g. sororities)

For the committee to be effective, it requires a dedicated staff liaison who must continually reach out, provide assistance and monitor recruitment. Consider holding regularly scheduled meetings with agendas which inform and seek feedback from



members on all aspects of election initiatives. Community outreach committees can be a good source of new ways of voter outreach, new methods of poll worker training, even new voting systems.

Internet and Broadcast Email

Use web technology to attract tech-savvy poll workers. Place recruitment messages on websites and use broadcast email to invite people to be poll workers.

Websites

The elections website in most jurisdictions includes a poll-worker recruitment message. For the message to be most effective:

- Put it on the home page.
- Give it a clear action title: “Be A Poll Worker!” is clearer than “Democracy in Action” and more compelling than “Poll Worker Information.”
- Include specific facts, such as: “It takes 13,000 citizen volunteers to run the polls in our county on Election Day.”
- Use the same message on the website that you use in print brochures and public service announcements.
- Link your message to additional information, such as:
 - An application that can be completed and submitted online.
 - An overview of the poll worker’s duties and how Election Day goes.
 - A list of the benefits and requirements
 - Testimonials from current or long-serving poll workers.
 - Training information – schedules, additional materials such as exercises, or even online training programs.
- Track new poll workers who came to you via the website.
- Ask other organizations to place the recruitment message on their websites. Use these messages at strategic times - a few months before elections. Consider asking



government agencies, community organizations and clubs, student groups and neighborhood associations.

Email

- Another useful tech-tool for recruiting poll workers is email, but don't become a "spammer." Instead, ask partner organizations to send an email recruitment message to their networks. You may compose a draft message that they can customize. For example, ask a business or government agency that regularly sends email announcements to their employees to include your recruitment message. Ask community organizations who email their members to do the same.
- Email address lists tend to degrade more rapidly than direct-mail address lists. So be sure to work with an organization that has a process for keeping its list current. Also, devise a way to track whether poll-worker recruitment is positively effected by the email outreach.

Adaptations

- Consider purchasing ads on search engines (i.e. Yahoo, MSN, Google) that will display when the user searches with election-related terms, for example: Vote, Voter, Register, Election, Elect, Election Day.
- Be sure to protect the integrity and good name of the elections office when you are linking to another organization's website. Examine their website completely. Be sure to approve the message and placement before it goes on the site. Consider including a disclaimer as to the connection between the organizations.
- One election official was experiencing great difficulties in recruiting bilingual poll workers in a certain language. She posted a detailed notice on *Craig's List* and was inundated with potential volunteers.

Section 5: #9 "Full-Service" Poll Worker Website (Arlington County, Virginia).

Section 5: #10 Website where potential poll-worker data enters information into the on-line application.

Public Service Announcements

Tips and Adaptations

- *Some public-access channels will air PSAs and even poll-worker training videos.*
- *Be specific about your needs.*
- *Give a phone number to call. Repeat the number.*
- *Messages for radio and television should be 28 seconds for 30 second slots.*
- *Find a professional writer to make the message clear and concise.*
- *In large urban areas where the media market covers more than one jurisdiction, consider working with colleagues in neighboring jurisdictions to develop a message that works for everyone.*
- *Have adequate staff who are prepared to respond to phone inquiries. Provide each staff member with a log for recording the recruitment piece the caller is responding to (i.e. news article, PSA, flyer). If necessary, direct overflow calls to a voice mail message asking the caller to leave a specific message, or to apply online.*

Public Service Announcements (PSA)

Radio and television stations are required to donate air time for public service announcements in exchange for their use of public airwaves. Many election officials have successfully persuaded stations to dedicate some of this time to poll-worker recruitment. Air time is a valuable commodity, so it is important to make the most of the thirty or sixty seconds you have to state your case!

Develop a list of all local radio stations, and television stations (the county public affairs officer can help with this). Establish a relationship with the public service director. Keep in touch even when you're not desperately trying to recruit poll workers – media staff change jobs at a rapid rate and you will want to know the person in charge of selecting which PSAs will air. Include minority and foreign-language radio and television stations.

Some radio and television stations will use their own staff to record the PSA. Other stations will accept pre-recorded PSAs. Producing your own PSA offers you greater creative control, but can be costly unless you have access to production equipment. Seek a sponsor to pay for producing your radio and television PSAs, or consider working with the local college or high school media production classes to produce your advertisements.

Section 5: #11 Radio PSA used in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area.

Media Coverage: Paid and Public Service

Many election officials place paid advertisements in local newspapers asking for poll workers for an upcoming election.

Ads can be extremely effective if properly placed and worded. To get reader's attention, include specifics: number of poll workers, locations to be served, skills required, time commitment.

Sample message:

"Lake County needs registered voters – especially voters who speak Spanish -- to work at the polls for the September 12th Primary. Workers will receive a stipend for their service. If you are interested in this opportunity, leave your name, your address, and your telephone number and we will respond promptly."

Section 5: #12 News coverage, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel January 7, 2007.

Media Coverage: Paid and Public Service

Tips and Adaptations

- *Time the placement of your ads for maximum effect: close enough to Election Day so people have begun thinking about the election, but with time to reply to, screen, place, and train all who respond.*
- *Advertise in small, local papers. They are likely to be less expensive, and you can target your audience.*
- *Arrange with the local newspaper to run a human-interest story about a poll worker. This could be about: the worker who has served longest; the new citizen who is thrilled to be serving his new country in this way, or the high school student who is a first-time voter and wants to serve democracy.*

The Telephone

Don't forget the telephone as an outreach tool. Some jurisdictions conduct phone drives to recruit poll workers from lists of registered voters. Phone drives have two big advantages: you can target hard-to-recruit-in areas, and focus-group research suggests that a personal request usually gets a better response than a broadcast message.

Other jurisdictions use the outgoing voice-mail message to urge callers to become poll workers. If you post a recruitment message on your voice-mail system, make sure the message includes directions ("Press 1 for our poll-worker recruiter" or "Be sure to ask about serving as a poll worker when you speak to a staff member.") Also, direct staff on handling these calls. Callers who have to make a second call, or are transferred several times, may lose interest.

The Mail: Targeted Postcards and Letters

One jurisdiction reports that a single recruitment letter sent to all registered voters brought in all the poll-worker recruits it needed. A mailing allows you to target hard-to-recruit-in areas, but a mailing can be labor-intensive if conducted in-house, or expensive if conducted by a mailing house.

Tips and Adaptations

- Target the type of poll worker needed.
- Consider ways to make the mailing stand out from other pieces of bulk mail.
- Use the same recruitment messages used in PSAs and other advertisements.
- Write in a personal, conversational style.
- Make sure the letter includes the requirements to serve as a poll worker.
- Don't forget to mention the stipend.
- Be sure to specify what the recipient should do. If you want the recipient to mail a response card, consider enclosing a self-addressed mailer with the voter's information on a label.
- Ask the school system to send home a recruitment brochure or flyer that you provide. A "parent recruitment program" gives access to a younger set of potential poll workers who are engaged in the community. All you need is good



rapport with your school administration, and flyers or brochures to put in the students' backpacks. Use a specific and compelling message that tells parents they are needed – and exactly where they are needed – in their community. Arrange to have your flyer distributed on a day when the material will stand out, so it will be less likely to land in the recycling bin.

Section 5: #13: Letter from San Diego County ROV

Double Duty for Voter Registration Forms

A number of states and jurisdictions include check boxes on the voter registration application and change of address form to indicate interest in serving as a poll worker. The checkboxes on the forms lets new voter registrants know that they too can work -- and are welcome and needed to serve — at the polls. Others include information in sample ballot booklets. Some election officials have told researchers that this practice, coupled with word-of-mouth, gave them sufficient numbers of poll workers.

Sign-up Sheets at Polling Places

Election officials have told researchers that placing sign-up sheets at polling places can be an effective method of attracting future poll workers. This can be as simple as a clipboard with sign-up sheets with a place for name, address and telephone number. Voters who see those working at the polls can sign up on the spot. Poll workers recruited in this way tend to know some of their co-workers already.

Section 5: #14 Kansas City, MO Sign-up Brochure at the Polls

Section 5: #15 Montgomery County, MD Sign-up Sheet at the Polls

Other Recruitment Ideas to Consider

Poll Worker “Draft”: The Nebraska Model

One U.S. jurisdiction drafts poll workers in a manner similar to that of drafting people to serve jury duty. Nebraska law permits a county to draft citizens to serve as Election Day workers. Citizens whose names are drawn from the list of registered voters must serve in four elections. Any individual

Voter Registration Forms

Tips and Adaptations:

- *This method may require cooperation with the state election office.*
- *Jurisdictions need sufficient staff to follow up with people who checked the box.*
- *This tool requires coordination between the voter registration staff and the poll worker recruiting staff. In jurisdictions using poll-worker management software, a database query can produce a list of registrants who checked the box.*

Pitfalls

- *Election officials in focus groups reported that some people may check the box without really understanding what a poll-worker does, and lose interest when staff follows up.*

Sign-up Sheets at Polling Places

Tips and Adaptation:

- *Include the sign-up sheets on the polling place set up diagram or checklist.*
- *Place the sign-up sheets strategically at all polling places.*
- *Train poll workers to point out the sign-up sheets to all voters. Make the sheets eye-catching so that poll workers will pull them out of their supply packages.*
- *Consider asking for email addresses from potential poll workers as an additional way to follow up with them.*

ordered to serve as an election official is not subject to discharge from employment, loss of pay, overtime pay, sick leave or vacation time, and may not be threatened with any such action. A person who fails to report on Election Day can be convicted of a Class III misdemeanor.

In 2000, Douglas County (Omaha) drafted 1,500 of its 2,500 Election Day workers. It was the only county in Nebraska to use drafted Election Day workers in 2000.

Pitfalls: Voters recruited through this practice may be reluctant to serve, and thus may not provide voters with a positive voting experience.

Outsourcing Your Recruitment Efforts

Contract with professional recruiters – firms or individuals who specialize in filling temporary positions – or a contractor with extensive community contacts, to conduct some or all of your poll-worker recruitment. Most components of election administration must be carried out in-house because they require election-specific expertise; poll-worker recruitment, however, can be carried out by professional recruiters with little or no elections expertise. Give your contractor clear direction, a timetable and oversight to get the best results.

Bonus: Your recruitment staff will pick up new contacts who will energize their efforts next time.

What Outsourcing Poll-Worker Recruitment Can Do

- Free up staff time and energy for other priorities.
- Tap into a fresh, potentially extensive, network of contacts in the community for recruiting poll workers.
- Access expert techniques that bring people and retain them time after time.

Pitfalls and Challenges

- The cost of outsourcing a recruiting effort may be more expensive than doing the recruiting in-house. Consider a pilot program and weigh the benefits.



Adaptations

- Recruiters can be hired to recruit all the poll workers or just one segment, such as bilingual poll workers or student poll workers.
- Recruiters can be hired as independent consultants or as temporary staff.
- Recruiters' tasks can include speaking to volunteer groups, staffing booths at public events, developing recruiting materials, or doing poll-worker intake duties.
- Depending on the number of poll workers needed, the number of recruiters can range from one to 50.

How to Evaluate an Outsourcing Program

- Use records from previous elections to compare the numbers and types of poll workers recruited at various pre-election dates.
- Set specific goals for the recruiter ahead of time. Will the recruiter be responsible for bringing in poll workers from the general public, from certain geographic areas, or to speak a certain language? Will the recruiter be responsible for following up potential poll workers to encourage them to serve in certain areas of the jurisdiction, or to encourage them to attend training?
- Track whether the recruits brought in by the outside recruiter are any more likely to be placed on a poll worker team, attend training, or serve more than one time.



High Schools

In This Chapter:

- **Description of High School Partnerships**
- **Benefits**
- **Pitfalls and Challenges**
- **Resources Needed**
- **Adapting the Program to Your Jurisdiction**
- **Tips**

High school poll-worker programs can be an exciting way to bring new faces into the poll-worker pool, as well as to engage young people in their community. The key is to create long-term partnerships with high school administrators and teachers to regularly recruit high school students to serve at polling places in their communities.

A number of states have statutes allowing high school students to serve as poll workers. Most of the statutes enable students to serve on Election Day as “regular poll workers,” helping to set up the polling places, assisting voters in signing in, issuing ballots and helping to close the polls. Other statutory models are more restrictive, and do not permit students to assist in processing ballots.

Some models require that a student be a high school senior, at least 16 years old, and with a minimum grade point average. In most cases, the student must be nominated or appointed by a teacher or principal, and obtain parental or custodial permission.

Purpose and Benefits

- **For Participating High Schools:** Teachers have been positive about student poll-worker programs because they complement students’ in-class civics curriculum.
- **For Participating Students:**
 - Students receive an hands-on community service opportunity.
 - Students may receive the poll-worker stipend.
 - Many teachers offer extra credit to students for attending the training and for drafting a report on their Election Day experiences.
 - Participation looks good on college and job applications.



- The community service element might fulfill a graduation requirement.

• **For Election Officials:**

- Students have a commitment to their teachers and parents to serve at a polling place, and therefore are likely to show up.
- Students are also in “learning mode” and so easily grasp complex election procedures.
- Students bring energy and vitality to a long-time poll-worker team.
- Students are likely to be comfortable with technology.
- Bilingual students can be a great bonus to a precinct team.

Pitfalls and Challenges

High school student poll-worker programs often require:

- Regular communication with administrators and teachers.
- Extra time to prepare students for the voting experience.
- Preparatory steps before a student poll worker can be placed on a poll-worker team, including, in many jurisdictions, nomination forms and parental authorization. Some jurisdictions had to limit the number of students who can be nominated from any one school because the community surrounding the school has limited poll-worker needs.
- Transportation problems, if students do not have cars or transportation to their assigned polling places.

Resources Needed

- Point person at the election office.
- Customized brochure or introductory packet; customized sign-up form.
- Statutory authorization, since many students will not be of voting age.
- Authorization from a jurisdiction’s Chief Administrative Officer or Board of Supervisors or Directors.

“The Key to Gary’s Success”

Election officials who implement Student Poll Worker Programs say that although the program is a lot of work, it does help to bring new energy and new faces to their Election Day team. But many of these election officials expressed frustration with recruiting enough students to serve before and during the summer months (i.e. primary and special elections.)

Gary Smith is Director of Elections and Registration for Forsyth County, Georgia. Forsyth County began its High School program in 2002. By the Primary 2004 election, Forsyth County’s goal was to use high school students as one-third of its poll workers... and they succeeded.

Gary attributes customized training as one factor in their success in having a large number of students serve in an August Primary. Training the students in a setting with their peers brings a comfort level. Making an effort to customize training, and adding a broader civics theme, shows the partnering teacher that the election official is committed to the larger idea of the program – not only to fill poll-worker shortages, but to promote life-long engagement in the voting process.

Adapting the Program to Your Jurisdiction

- For jurisdictions with particular challenges in recruiting poll workers in lower-income areas, a High School Poll-Worker Program can be invaluable, especially in those states where poll workers must reside in the assigned precinct.
- Warning!! You may need to use different strategies for elections held when school is not in session.

Tips

- Offer on-site or special training for the students. Poll-worker training classes are geared to experienced voters, but many high school poll workers will not be familiar with the set-up of a polling place or how a vote is cast. A customized in-class voter outreach presentation provides an opportunity for students to ask the “big picture” questions in the company of their peers. Some jurisdictions offer on-site training for schools with 20 or more participating students.
- Check in annually with each school and remind them when it is time to recruit again. Also discuss ways to highlight their contributions by publicizing their efforts.
- Remember: A good school liaison is the key to success (Place Reminder icon here.) Your teachers will be your invaluable partners from election to election. The program can be a lot of work for the teacher, answering student questions, forwarding nomination forms, encouraging the students to attend training (or hosting the training) and following up with students who served. Certificates of appreciation can underscore their hard work.
- Bonus Tip: \$\$\$\$! One jurisdiction began to provide the equivalent of a poll-worker stipend to the high school teachers who regularly coordinate the program in their community.
- Students can be motivated by knowing about other students who have been poll workers. If possible, provide students with photos and quotes from graduates who participated in the program.
- Unfortunately, some veteran poll workers might not appreciate having a student poll worker on their team. They may assign an uninteresting task, such as handing out “I VOTED” stickers all day. Suggest to the lead poll worker in the polling place that substantive or varied Election Day tasks can make a huge difference in the student poll worker’s experience.

Voting Day



First Vote Students making a difference



*Photos Courtesy of Gary Smith,
Forsyth County, GA*

How to Evaluate Your Program

- Feedback from teachers, participating students and poll workers who served with students is critical to assess the success of the program. Providing a post-election evaluation of the program to these stakeholders can result in valuable insights about the program and ways to improve it. Bringing in the parents of participating students expands the support team.
- Record how many students were nominated and served from each school.

Section 5: #16: Augusta-Richmond County poster.



Colleges and Universities

In This Chapter:

- **Benefits**
 - **EAC Guidebook on College PW Programs: A Great Resource!**
 - **Resources Needed**
 - **Adapting the Program to Your Jurisdiction**
 - **Tips**
-

College Poll-Worker Programs partner with college administrators and professors to recruit college students to serve at polling places on Election Day. Students recruited through such programs often receive extra credit, in addition to the volunteer stipend.

Purpose and Benefits

- **For Participating Colleges:** Professors appreciate the opportunity they can offer students.
- **For Participating Students:** Students receive an invaluable hands-on community-service opportunity. Students also receive the poll-worker stipend, and many professors offer extra credit to students for attending the training and writing a report on their Election Day experiences.
- **Benefits for Election Officials:**
 - Students have made a commitment to their professor and are likely to show up.
 - Students are likely to be comfortable with technology.
 - Bilingual students can be a great bonus to a precinct team.

Resources Needed

- Point person at the election office with brochures and sign-up forms.

Adapting the Program to Your Jurisdiction

- For jurisdictions with particular challenges in recruiting poll workers in hard-to-recruit communities, the College Poll-Worker Program can be invaluable, especially in those



EAC Guidebook on College PW Programs:

A Great Resource!

- *The EAC's Guidebook on College Poll-Worker Programs examines formal and informal college poll-worker programs across the U.S. from the viewpoint of election officials, college administrators, professors and students.*
-

states where poll workers must reside in the assigned precinct and where colleges are located in or near hard-to-recruit communities.

Tips

- Offer on-site training. Poll worker training classes are geared to experienced voters. A customized in-class voter-outreach presentation provides an opportunity for students to ask questions. Some jurisdictions offer on-site training to schools with 20 or more participating students. On-site training means that more time can be spent showing the students what a polling place looks like, explaining its basic functions, and offering information on who can vote or serve as a poll worker.
- Check in regularly with colleges and universities, reminding them when it is time to recruit again.

How to Evaluate if Program is on Track

- Feedback from professors, participating students and poll workers who served with students is critical to assessing the program. Providing a post-election evaluation of the program to these stakeholders can result in valuable insights about the program and ways to improve it.



Bilingual Poll Workers

In This Chapter:

- **Background**
- **Federal Requirements Regarding Bilingual Poll Workers**
- **Benefits of Bilingual Poll Workers**
- **Benefits of Partnering with Community Organizations**
- **Identifying How Many Bilingual Poll Workers are Needed and Where**
- **Pitfalls and Challenges**
- **Resources Needed**
- **Tips**

All citizens are entitled to register to vote, to understand the details of the election and voting processes, and to cast a well-informed, free and effective ballot. Toward this end, more than 450 election jurisdictions across the U.S. are required to ensure that election information available in English is also available in one or more other languages.

Nationwide, 466 local jurisdictions in 31 states provide language assistance. Of this total: 102 in 18 states assist Native Americans or Alaskan Natives in 18 states; 17 in seven states assist Asian language speakers; and 382 in 20 states assist Spanish speakers. Some offer assistance in several languages.

Federal Requirements Regarding Bilingual Poll Workers

Section 203, added to the Voting Rights Act in 1975, requires certain jurisdictions to make language assistance available at polling locations for citizens with limited English proficiency.

- Section 203 applies to four groups: Native Americans, Asian Americans, Alaskan Natives, and those of Latino heritage. A community with one of these groups will qualify for language assistance if (1) more than 5 percent of the voting-age citizens in a jurisdiction belong to a single language minority community and have limited English proficiency (LEP) or (2) more than 10,000 voting-age citizens in a jurisdiction belong to a single language minority community and are LEP or (3) the illiteracy rate of the citizens in the language minority is higher than the national illiteracy rate.
- Every ten years, the U.S. Census Bureau develops a list of Section 203 jurisdictions that is reported in the Federal Register. The 2000 list was posted in June 2002 and can



be located at:

http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/voting/sec_203/203_notice.pdf.

- Registration and voting materials for all elections must be provided in the minority language, as well as in English.

Benefits

- Bilingual poll workers provide a valuable service to voters who are not proficient in English. Limited-English voters are able to vote more confidently when they understand the voting process and can make informed decisions on ballot issues.
- Most poll workers welcome bilingual poll workers to the precinct team.
- Bilingual poll workers have told researchers that they enjoy the opportunity to serve their community.

Section 5: #17 King County “Ask Me: I Speak Chinese” button

- Assigning bilingual poll workers to a precinct can help it run more smoothly on Election Day. Voters who need extra assistance can slow down the processing of voters. A friendly face and a common language spoken by a bilingual poll worker can help streamline such proceedings.

Benefits of Partnering with Civic Organizations to Recruit Bilingual Poll Workers

One way to recruit bilingual poll workers is to work with civic organizations. Recruiting over the phone is generally ineffective. A personal connection – through family, community members or community leaders - is more important.

Election officials who recruit bilingual poll workers do so through presentations and information booths at community centers, job fairs, churches, health fairs and meetings of community/service groups. Election officials also use messages distributed through community/service groups' newsletters. Many election officials have found that partnering with community organizations can be very effective.

Tips to make the most of these partnerships:

- **Be specific in your request.** Explain to community outreach leaders the need for bilingual poll workers. Explain the language or dialect needed, when the poll workers are needed, duration of the work and duties or positions. Request a specific number of volunteers to serve on Election Day.



- **Educate your partners.** The general public often doesn't know how many poll workers run the polls, that ordinary citizens volunteer to be poll workers, that there is training to be a poll worker, or even that materials are available in alternative languages.
- **Be open to community feedback.** Not only can community groups be valuable recruiting partners, but they can also provide insightful feedback. In addition, you may hear important community voting-related concerns that need to be addressed.
- **Use the Internet.** Ask professional community organizations to post the recruitment announcement on their websites or in their e-newsletters.

Identifying Specific Needs

- The first step in a Bilingual Poll Worker Program is to identify how many bilingual poll workers are needed and where they are needed.

Model Targeting System for Identifying Where the Need is:

- **Census Data.** This can be found on the local level. Unfortunately, such data may not follow precinct lines. Some jurisdictions work with Geographic Information Systems (GIS) staff or with a vendor to provide assistance.
- **Voter Requests on File.** There are several ways election officials can track requests from voters for language assistance:
 - Include a check box on voter registration forms for voters with limited-English proficiency to request translated materials.
 - Advertise a designated phone number where an operator with language skills can assist a limited-English voter.
- **Tracking Voters at Polls.** Consider providing a tally card to each polling place for poll workers to keep track of voters requesting language assistance.

Section 5: #18 LA's multilingual tally card here

- **Input from Community-based Organizations.** If a community partner-organization indicates that a neighborhood should be targeted for a particular language, ask poll workers to track that need over



several elections. In addition, ask bilingual poll workers to keep track of the number of voters they assisted.

- **Dialect Surveys.** You may need to track dialects within languages. For example, both Cantonese and Mandarin speakers can read Chinese written characters, but a speaker of Cantonese finds it difficult to understand a Mandarin speaker. Consider conducting a phone or postcard survey of language speakers for which there is a dialect issue. Then place dialect speakers where they are needed.
- **Other Measures.** Consider providing a toll-free or dedicated line so that limited-English proficiency voters can call to request language assistance and polling place locations. Advertise in community newspapers and translated flyers announcing that there is a specific phone number to call where a voter can request translated materials.

Section 5: #19 Clark County “Bilingual Poll Workers Needed” two-language flyer.

Section 5: #20 King County, WA “Play a Role in Delivering Democracy” flyer.

- **Brochures.** Producing a brochure that is available in each of the jurisdiction’s mandated languages can be helpful. The brochure can advise limited-English voters how to request translated materials, how to request assistance at their polling place, and the contact information of partner organizations which can be of assistance. This brochure can be distributed at community events, community libraries and schools, etc.

Pitfalls and Challenges

- Recruiting bilingual poll workers has all of the challenges of recruiting traditional poll workers, plus a few more. Bilingual poll workers must also speak English well enough to explain election procedures to English-only voters.
- Some voters – or even established poll workers – may not welcome bilingual poll workers, especially if they feel that only English should be spoken at the polls. To address these concerns, provide information about how important it is that all voters have the opportunity to fully participate in elections. Remind poll workers that “this is the law.”
- **Cost:** Some jurisdictions have found “Multilingual Voter” (ML) programs expensive.



Adaptations

- Target high schools and colleges attended by bilingual students. Form relationships with administrators, teachers or professors and student organizations. Arrange to make presentations and distribute recruiting materials to bilingual students.
- Target public sector (county, state, municipal) bilingual employees. Some jurisdictions provide a bonus to employees who speak a second language (court recorders, social workers, health workers) and may be willing to share their lists.

Tips

- Hiring one or more bilingual speakers from the community to recruit poll workers can be one of the most effective ways to recruit bilingual speakers.
- As with the general public, minority-language speakers often do not know that poll workers are needed, how to become a poll worker, or the time commitment involved. Stress to minority-language speakers that they can become poll workers, too.
- Minority-language media (TV, radio) can be a terrific partner in publicizing the need for bilingual poll workers. Invite them to press conferences and detail how and where bilingual poll workers are needed.

Section 5: #21 Clark County newspaper bilingual poll worker recruitment ad (pdf)

- Consider sending a postcard to current poll workers asking if they speak a second language and if they would be interested in serving in a polling place where that language often spoken.

How to Evaluate if Your Program

- Keep track of the voters who apply to serve as bilingual poll workers and monitor how many are placed on a precinct team. Assess the reasons that some applicants do not actually serve. This may help you adapt your outreach efforts, improve your message and train recruiters to net a larger pool.

Section 5: #22 “ML Requests on File” tracking chart, Los Angeles County (Excel spreadsheet and bar chart)

“It sends a very positive message to the minority language communities when they see staff members in the office who look like them, can speak their language, and can relate to their experiences and concerns. Speaking from personal experience, I have found that it is much easier to recruit and retain poll workers – especially bilingual ones from the minority language communities – when they feel a special connection to a staff member in the office, or when they feel that they would be representing their community by signing up to work at the polls.”

(Helen Y. Wong, Language Coordinator, Boston Election Department)

- As with all poll workers, track whether the bilingual poll workers attend training. Consider calling a sampling of bilingual poll workers to ask if they found the training valuable, or if they have any questions.

Model A: Media Outreach from King County, Washington's Board of Elections

Model: Working with the Media, Boston CBS-4
 "2006 State Elections" August 19, 2006
 Yadires Nova-Salcedo, Reporting

(CBS-4) State elections are coming up this September and November and the city of Boston is expecting as many voters as possible to go out there and perform their civic duty. Now, to make sure that all of the registered voters fully understand the process, the Boston Election Department is looking for poll workers who can speak Spanish and many other languages. CBS 4's Yadires Nova-Salcedo talks with Helen Wong, Language Coordinator for the Boston Election Department. Tune in!

*For more information or to get yourself an application to become a poll worker, you can call the Boston Election Department at 617-635-4491.
 (© MMVI, CBS Broadcasting Inc. All Rights Reserved.)*



CBS 4's Yadires Nova-Salcedo talks with Helen Wong, Language Coordinator for the Boston Election Department.

Model: Sample Websites providing translated election materials and voter information:

- San Francisco:
http://www.herbcaenday.org/site/election_index.asp
- New York: <http://www.vote.nyc.ny.us/>
- Los Angeles: <http://www.lavote.net/>

"What we've found in our outreach is that our Chinese-American community does not respond to the TV/radio/print media that we run in English.

We had to think out of the box to meet our bilingual-speaking poll-worker numbers, and I'm proud to say in 2005 we had a 92 percent placement for the fall cycle, and for the 2006 September primary we had 100 percent placement for our targeted polling locations. We owe that credit to the TV ad we ran featuring our former Governor Gary Locke, the first Chinese-American governor in the U.S. We paid to have the ads run during the top-rated Chinese television shows on an all-Chinese TV station here in Seattle called AATV. The top rated shows are a soap opera and the 10 p.m. news. The station threw in two additional runs throughout the day as "community service" to their audience.

The most success we've had in recruiting bilingual poll workers and placing ads is to have our minority language compliance coordinators do the pitching and recruiting, and request additional coverage at no charge as a public service to the community. People are much more eager to help when asked by someone they relate to, or a friend of a friend of a friend. While this is also effective for all recruitment efforts, we've found it essential in recruiting bilingual speaking poll workers."

*- Bobbie Egan / Colleen Kwan,
 King County Elections Division*

Businesses and Corporations

In This Chapter:

- **Description of Partnerships with Businesses and Corporations**
- **Benefits**
- **Pitfalls and Challenges**
- **Resources Needed**
- **Tips**

Ask businesses to recruit and encourage employees, on a paid basis (using administrative leave or service leave) when possible, to serve at the polls on Election Day. Workers usually receive the poll-worker stipend in addition to their regular salary.

Benefits

Participating companies often contribute to the communities in which they do business. This type of program allows them to give back to the community without additional expenditures (salaries are already budgeted). Many employees enjoy serving as pollworkers, and may be repeat volunteers as well as providing word-of-mouth recruitment in the business. Many employees who were poll workers said they felt a sense of camaraderie in their work place. Some poll workers donate their stipend to a community charity, or a charity relevant to the business.

Participating employees in Franklin County, Ohio, said they enjoyed the break in their routine and a sense of satisfaction from serving and getting to know their community better.

Poll workers who are serving on “company time” have an added incentive to “show up” on Election Day – the reputation of their company is on the line. Election officials report that these poll workers seem especially flexible. They are willing to travel to areas of the jurisdiction where there are last-minute vacancies or where troubleshooters are needed. Some corporate employees like to take on this new responsibility as a challenge, setting the tone for the troubleshooter team.

Corporate Poll Worker Programs can be an effective way to recruit younger, more technologically savvy poll workers.

Pitfalls and Challenges

- Some corporate poll workers may become impatient if their calls do not receive a prompt response. Also, they may be



critical of ill-prepared training programs if they have participated in high-quality corporate training programs.

- Some corporate poll workers require regular reminders to maintain the collaboration and generate ongoing support within the business community. Also, the relationship with some corporations and companies may change with shifts in management.
- Corporate programs can occasionally raise political challenges. For instance, if a participating corporation has an interest in an issue appearing on the ballot, there could be an appearance of impropriety.

Resources Needed

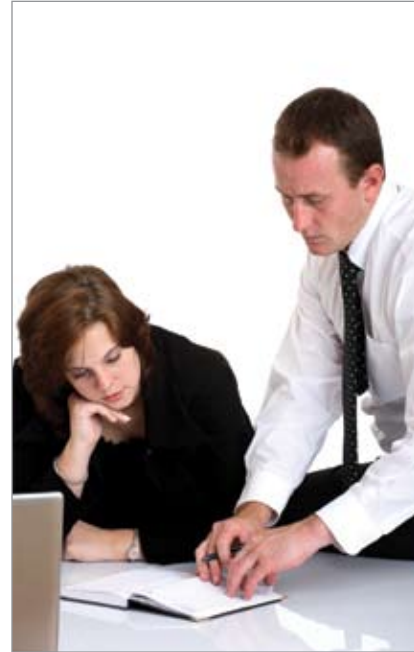
- Point person at election office. Brochure or introductory packet/letter to corporate leader or human relations department. Poll-worker application form. Possibly authorization from jurisdiction's Chief Administrative Officer or Board of Supervisors.

Adaptations

- Corporate poll workers may request the opportunity to split a shift. Jurisdictions may want to find a way to make this possible (See Chapter 10: Split Shifts).
- Competition can add to the success of the program. For example, in one county, the regional banks began to compete among themselves to provide the most participants. Election officials may want to start a pilot program with two competitive businesses.

Tips

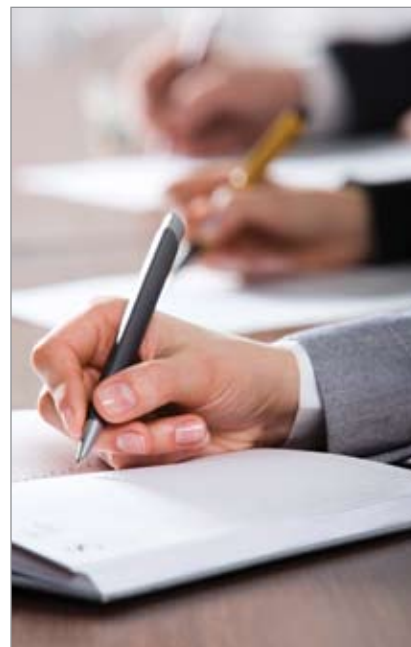
- Ask the local Chamber of Commerce for their support and ideas. Consider sending a joint letter to the Chamber's mailing list, describing the Corporate Poll Worker Program and the requirements for being a poll worker. Encourage businesses to allow their staff to be poll workers without having to use personal or annual leave. Providing a brief presentation at periodic gatherings can also yield results.
- Engage a high-profile elected official or leader from the jurisdiction (such as a county executive or county supervisor) to serve as spokesperson for the program. Such leaders may open doors by sending an initial letter of introduction.



- Use a long lead time when working with other corporations. Have a brief introductory statement detailing the process the corporations and their employees should follow to get involved, the specific duties of poll workers, and the time commitment that will be necessary. After Election Day, report to the corporations how many of their workers actually served.
- Tell potential workers if you plan to ask that they travel out of their immediate neighborhood to serve.
- Offer on-site training. This not only makes volunteering easier for employees, but also allows an additional opportunity to recruit from the company. Some jurisdictions provide on-site training if the participating company supplies 25 or more poll workers.
- Create a catchy title for the program. One jurisdiction calls their Corporate Poll Worker Program, “Champions of Democracy.”
- Check in annually with each corporation and remind them when it is time to recruit again. Discuss ways to highlight their contribution by publicizing their efforts both internally and externally.
- In most cases, allow corporation employees to wear attire with the company logo. In Franklin County, Ohio, some companies have made shirts especially for this program. The Columbus Dispatch had shirts made with “Columbus Dispatch, Champions of Democracy” on them.
- Consider publicly recognizing every participant in the program with an ad in the local paper and a certificate to the corporation.

Evaluation

- Create a field in your database to track which businesses or corporations are providing potential poll workers, and those who serve on Election Day. Participating corporations may set up their own database and periodically provide it to the election official throughout the recruiting period. Corporations may use the information to check to see which employees served on Election Day, and to recognize those employees.
- Distribute a survey to participants asking for feedback on how to make the recruiting and training more effective. Be sure to share feedback with the contact person at the corporation or business.

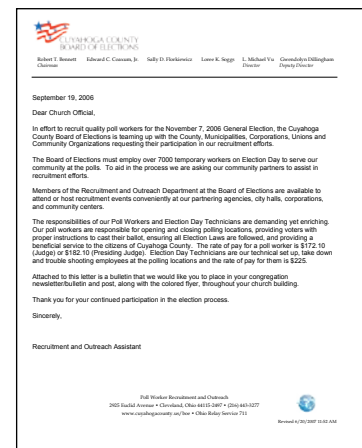
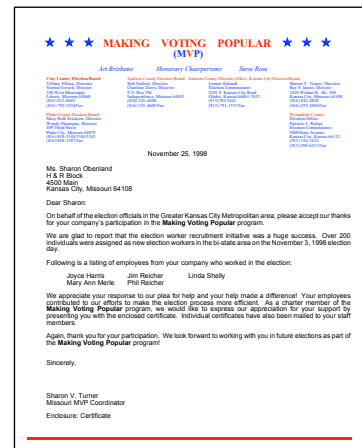


Section 5: #23 Champions of Democracy “Come Back” letter on letterhead, Franklin County, Ohio

Section 5: #24 Making Voting Popular (MVP) Thank you letter to corporate partner, Kansas/MO.

Section 5: #25 Champions of Democracy “Letter to Churches, Cuyahoga County Ohio

Section 5: #26 Certificate of Completion Wayne Community College, City of Detroit, Michigan



Civic and Charitable Organizations

In This Chapter:

- **Description of Recruiting Partnerships with Civic and Charitable Organizations**
 - **Benefits**
 - **Pitfalls and Challenges**
 - **Resources Needed**
 - **Adapting the Program to your Jurisdiction**
 - **Tips**
-

Civic and charitable organizations, whose members are dedicated to community service, can be good places for recruiting poll workers. Such organizations are generally well organized and capable of fulfilling their commitments.

One model is to have an organization recruit enough poll workers to fully staff one or several polling places. Some jurisdictions refer to this as an “Adopt-a-Poll” model. Organizations tend to prefer this approach because their members can serve together and perhaps present an identity at the polling place by wearing their non-partisan insignia. Another model is to have the organizations help with your general recruitment efforts. A third model is for the organization to receive the poll workers’ stipends as a donation. Doing so is a popular fundraiser for some organizations

The more specific your request for help, the more likely you will get a positive response. Explain the need for poll workers to the community service chairperson. Be very specific — when, how many people, to serve where, why there, for how long, and what duties/positions – and request a specific number of volunteers to serve on Election Day. Explain your expectations clearly and thoroughly.

It may be necessary to educate the civic group about the role of and need for poll workers by speaking at one of their regular meetings. The general public often doesn’t know how many poll workers run the polls, that ordinary citizens volunteer to be poll workers and that there is training required. They don’t know there are myriad regulations – which change often – governing elections.

Benefits/Purpose

- Increase both the number of people recruiting poll workers and the number of polling places that are fully staffed on Election Day.

- Increase knowledge among community members about the need for poll workers, their functions on Election Day, and about election administration in general.
- Increase effectiveness of all recruitment efforts as you develop and communicate more specific recruitment messages.

Resources needed

The current resources of the elections office will be sufficient initially as you test and pilot the program. Eventually you may dedicate staff to recruiting poll workers from civic and charitable organizations.

Pitfalls and Challenges

- Maintain the relationship with the organization between elections. Ask for feedback from the organization on their members' experiences serving as poll workers and on the training they received. Visit a general meeting to report on the effectiveness of the partnership and on Election Day in general and to thank them for their help. Send a quarterly newsletter describing your activities.
- Occasionally groups over-commit. This could leave you in a bind at the last minute. So build this program over several elections. Test with one or two polling places.
- Finding the civic, community and charitable groups with whom to partner can be difficult although there are helpful resources. The volunteer center in a community and the Chambers of Commerce are good starting places. One jurisdiction made a successful start to a program by reaching out to churches, many of which are polling places.

Adapting the Program to Your Jurisdiction

- Recruiting poll workers from civic and charitable organizations may be easier in larger jurisdictions, which are more likely to have a volunteer center that has contact information for all the non-profits in the area.
- In most jurisdictions it will be necessary to talk to many people to discover the organizations you don't already know about. Look for civic groups, fraternities and sororities (undergraduate and graduate chapters), college and university alumni clubs, professional associations, auxiliaries, church groups, neighborhood associations, interfaith groups, civil rights groups, social and dance clubs,

Here's what civic groups and volunteer centers want election administrators to know about recruiting poll workers from charitable groups:

If you want us to work for you tell us . . .

• Why you need us

Members of civic groups want to serve the community but don't know much about what's involved in casting a ballot. Explain how they fit into the big picture.

• What you need us to do, when, and where

The more specific you are the better so folks can fairly assess their ability to fulfill a commitment before they make it.

• How we will know what to do

Most volunteers will appreciate training because they want to do a good job, uphold the good name of their organization, and make a difference.

• Who we will work with and report to

Folks want to do a good job and want to be able to solve problems. Knowing the chain of command reassures folks they won't be "making it up on the fly."

youth athletic organizations (for the parents not the children), running, biking or rowing clubs.

Tips

- Develop a strong working relationship initially with a few groups and together anticipate problems and work out solutions. This will create ownership within the groups and give you good information to reach out to additional groups.
- Although a number of poll workers may be recruited from a single organization, treat them each as individuals. Require each to do what you require of poll workers – complete an application, meet eligibility requirements, take the training course, submit an evaluation or time sheet, etc.
- Ease the organizations into the program. In the first year, place the organizations' volunteers so they can work with and learn from experienced poll workers.
- In a “Help Wanted” section on the elections' division website, include a description of the program, the requirements of participating organizations and individuals, and any forms that must be completed and submitted.
- Be careful not to displace established teams of long-serving, knowledgeable poll workers with civic teams. One jurisdiction mixes new and seasoned poll workers. Another jurisdiction lets a civic group “fly solo” after working an election with an experienced team.

How to Evaluate If Your Program is on Track

Monitor poll workers provided by civic and charitable groups. On Election Day, have specially trained and experienced poll workers serve as roving troubleshooters. Such persons can visit a number of polling places to check on operations and troubleshoot any problems they encounter. Consider hosting a post-election critique with representatives of the groups to solicit their feedback.

Section 5: #25: Letter to Churches, Cuyahoga County Ohio

Section 5: #26: Sample Notice for Church Bulletin, Detroit, MI

Section 5: #27: “Make Voting Popular” Recruiting Letter to Participating Organizations, Kansas/Missouri Metropolitan Area.

Government Employees as Poll Workers

In This Chapter:

- **Recruiting in Partnership with Government Agencies**
 - **Benefits**
 - **Pitfalls and Challenges**
 - **Resources Needed**
 - **Adapting the Program to your Jurisdiction**
 - **Tips**
-

The public sector is a good place for recruiting poll workers. Doing so is especially effective where Election Day is a state holiday (usually General Election only) or where county employees can work at the polls on Election Day. In both circumstances, public sector employees are not required to use personal/annual leave to work as poll workers but they have the advantage of receiving both their regular salary and the poll worker stipend.

- Recruiting tactics include putting recruitment flyers in paycheck envelopes, posting flyers around common spaces, establishing recruitment tables in cafeterias and sending emails. Generally, employees must obtain the approval of their supervisor.
- “County Poll Worker,” “City Poll Worker,” and “State Poll Worker” Programs are popular with employees, and provide participants with a community service opportunity.

Benefits

- **Benefits for Participating Employees.** Employees enjoy the break in their routine and derive a sense of satisfaction from serving their community.
- **Benefits for Election Officials.** Public sector employees who have applied for and obtained approval from supervisors to serve have an added incentive to “show up” on Election Day.

Public Sector Poll Workers may be willing to travel to areas where there are vacancies or a particular need for troubleshooters. Some public sector employees like to take on this new responsibility as a challenge, setting a new tone for the troubleshooter team.

Public Sector Poll Worker Programs can be an effective way to recruit younger, more technologically savvy poll workers.

Public sector employee programs may also be a good source of bilingual poll workers.

Resources Needed.

- Point person at the election office.
- Brochure or introductory packet/letter to corporate leader or human relations department.
- Sign-up form.
- You may need to obtain authorization from your jurisdiction's Chief Administrative Officer or Board of Supervisors/Directors. Pitfalls and Challenges.
- Government Employee Poll Worker Programs can take work to set up. Relationships with the relevant public sector managers require regular communications to maintain collaboration and generate ongoing support.
- Public sector employees seem no more willing than neighborhood-based poll workers to go to a polling place other than their own.
- There will be natural attrition. Public sector employees retire, leave public service, or go on long-term leave.
- Public sector managers will want to be assured there is not going to be an unacceptable drain on critical agency functions on Election Day.
- There could be a real or perceived conflict of interest if the employee is a political employee -- check the law in your jurisdiction.
- Be aware that in some jurisdictions, government employees may be expected to take a day off to help with get-out-the-vote activities.

Adaptations

- Some jurisdictions are so supportive of the recruiting effort, that department or agency VIPs volunteer to serve as poll workers, allowing a jurisdiction's VIPs and department heads to lead by example.
- Employee "IT" staffers can be great troubleshooters, serving in the early morning to get polling places up and

running, and as evening support for closing polls or getting results to counting centers. (article is removed — instead of a great troubleshooters... just great troubleshooters)

Tips

- Flyers included in employee paycheck envelopes often get better results than posted or hand-distributed ones.
- Engage a high-profile elected official or leader to serve as spokesperson for the program. Such leaders may open doors by sending an initial letter of introduction for the election official to follow up.
- Prepare a brief statement that details how employees can get involved, poll worker duties, their time commitments and the chances they will be asked to travel out of their own neighborhoods. Report to the agencies from which employees volunteered if their employees actually participated on Election Day.
- Offer on-site training. This not only makes volunteering easier for the employees, but it also allows for an additional opportunity to recruit from the government agency.
- Check-in annually with a representative at each public agency and remind him or her when it is time to recruit again. Discuss ways to highlight their contributions by publicizing their efforts both internally and externally or invite them to a post-election recognition event.
- Incumbents may not serve as poll workers if they are on the ballot.

How to Evaluate If Your Program is On Track

Create a field in your database to track which agencies provide potential poll workers and which of these employees actually served on Election Day. Participating agencies may set up their own database and provide it to the election official during the recruiting period. The participating agency may use the database to check to see if the employees served on Election Day and to recognize the employees.

Distribute a survey to participants, asking for feedback on how to make the recruiting and training more effective. Be sure to share the responses with the contact person at agency.

A stumbling block for some counties has been whether or not eligibility for overtime is an issue in County Poll Worker Programs. Several County Counsels have advised that “employees....would not be eligible for overtime as they would be considered “occasional and sporadic” employees for purposes of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA.) The Fair Labor Standards Act has such a category that provides that local government employees may, at their option, work occasionally and sporadically on a part-time basis for the same agency in a capacity different from their regular employment and the hours worked in the different job do not have to be combined with the regular hours for purposes of determining overtime liability (29 U.S.C. section 207 (p)(2)).” This legal interpretation can take a Public Employee Poll Worker Program from being prohibitively expensive to a reasonable investment.

Section 5: #28: Milwaukee's City Major letter to City Managers

Section 5: #29: Brochure from Augusta, GA "Become a Member of the County/City Poll Worker Team"

Section 5: #30: Board of Commissioners Resolution creating a County PW program, Cuyahoga County, Ohio

Poll Workers with Disabilities

In This Chapter:

- **Description of Recruiting Poll Workers with Disabilities**
 - **Benefits**
 - **Pitfalls and Challenges**
 - **Resources Needed**
 - **Adapting the Program to Your Jurisdiction**
 - **Tips**
-

A targeted recruitment campaign to enlist poll workers with disabilities, including mobility impairment, impaired vision and cognitive disabilities can be a terrific investment in broadening your poll worker pool.

The Help America Vote Act (HAVA) contains provisions and funding to ensure that voters with disabilities can vote privately and independently at the polling place on Election Day. Election jurisdictions are spending millions of dollars on voting equipment that ensures accessibility to the polling place and the voting process.

To encourage voters with disabilities to exercise their right to a secret ballot requires more than sending a notice to disabled voters – election officials need to take proactive steps to make the polling place welcoming for voters with special needs. Recruiting and hiring poll workers who have special needs themselves sends a strong message to the disabled community that they are a part of the democratic process.

If recruiting and hiring poll workers with disabilities seems daunting, consider this: most election jurisdictions already employ poll workers with disabilities. Most disabilities are invisible to the average person. Additionally, given the average age of poll workers, many volunteers have mobility and vision impairments. It is a short step from accommodating these workers to encouraging others like them to staff the polls on Election Day.

There are two models for recruiting poll workers with special needs: (1) form a partnership with an agency or organization serving disabled citizens to conduct the recruitment effort among clients or members; (2) have election staff conduct outreach to organizations and agencies that work with the disabled community. Both models require developing a good working relationship with community partners.

Purpose and Benefits

- Poll workers with disabilities can provide useful guidance for election officials on how to serve people with disabilities. For example, one of the biggest challenges in implementing new, accessible equipment is figuring out how to train poll workers to provide assistance with the audio ballot. Including visually impaired poll workers in the development of this component of training is invaluable.
- Poll workers with disabilities can educate other poll workers on how to promote access to the polling place and the voting equipment.
- Recruiting poll workers with disabilities can build goodwill in the community, particularly among voting rights advocates.

Resources Needed

- Good working relationship with a protection and advocacy program or other advocate for people with disabilities
- Resources for converting written materials into an accessible format
- Staff time

Pitfalls and Challenges

- The training and polling sites must be accessible. In addition, transportation to and from these places may be a challenge.
- Training materials must be available in alternative formats. Many blind and vision-impaired citizens have computers with features that allow them to “read” Microsoft Word documents. Materials can be made accessible by posting MS Word versions on the website. Another option is to purchase a document reader and make it available to disabled poll workers at the elections office.
- Voters with disabilities may be intimidated by the prospect of extensive public contact or finding themselves in the public eye.
- Polling place supply bags will need to include special tools to provide an accessible work environment. Examples include: Q-tips for touching target points on a touch-screen voting machine; hand-held magnifying devices for enlarging paper ballot and check-in roster print; and pen or pencil grip enhancers.

Adaptations

- If your voter registration records track voters with disabilities, send a recruitment notice to all voters whose records indicate they have a disability. (If your voter registration form does not ask if the applicant is disabled and needs assistance at the polls, consider lobbying for that change with those in charge of designing the application form.)

Tips for Successful Implementation

- Poll workers with disabilities may need extra time to make travel arrangements prior to Election Day, so it is important to let them know their assignments early in advance.
- Libraries can be a good resource for tackling the challenge of making written materials accessible. Many libraries have reading and recording services for the blind.
- Provide impaired poll workers with the various job descriptions and ask them what role would be best for them to serve.

Section 5: #31: Section One: Chapter Eight: Recruiting Poll Workers with Disabilities: Photo from Pasadena, CA polling place

Evaluation

- Designing an effective recruitment program will likely take more than one election cycle. Evaluate the experience of poll workers with disabilities and the obstacles encountered during the recruitment process.



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Partnership with Political Parties

In This Chapter:

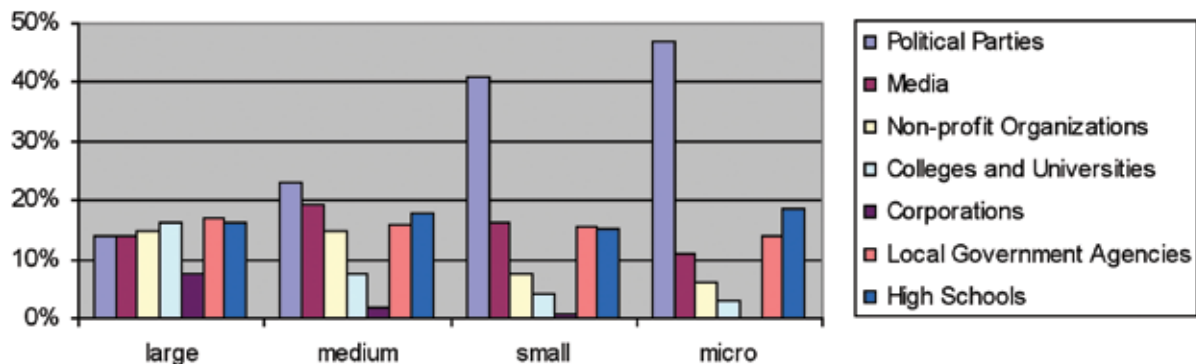
- Description of Recruiting Partnerships with Political Parties
- Benefits
- Pitfalls and Challenges
- Resources Needed
- Adapting the Program to Your Jurisdiction
- Tips

Some states statutorily require that the political parties supply names of potential poll workers to the election jurisdiction. Other states and jurisdictions have made such agreements informally.

In some jurisdictions, the election official must use the lists provided by the political parties as a starting point for staffing precincts. In others, state or local officials request names, addresses and phone numbers for potential poll workers from political party directors.

Potential poll workers lists from political parties may not be especially effective in the recruitment process. The chart below suggests that small and micro-sized counties may have greater success in working with political parties to recruit poll workers.

**NACo Survey: Sources of Pollworker Recruitment
(by size of jurisdiction)**



Benefits

- This recruitment practice can help you maintain a balanced pool of poll workers from each party.
- It can help you create or maintain a good working relationship with the political parties.

Pitfalls and Challenges

- Some political parties use the Election Day service as a patronage job, doled out to the party faithful, but not necessarily to those most qualified and willing to serve.
- Party representatives may be tempted to work for the success of a particular candidate.
- Political party lists may come too late to be of use.
- Political parties are more likely to want members and other volunteers to serve as observers.
- Political party poll workers may only want to work in high-stakes elections and will not be reliable components of the long-term election team.

Tips

- Hire political representatives from the major political parties on an as-needed basis and pay them to assist in recruitment.
- Let the parties do the bulk of the recruitment. That allows the election officials to pick the ones with the appropriate knowledge, skills and abilities.

Adaptations

- One county sends the party chairs blank recruitment list forms along with forms containing those who worked last time. The party chairs send them to precinct committee representatives, who list people to fill the poll workers slots. The precinct chairs send their lists back to the party chairs, who return them to the election office by a cut-off date. The office staff fills the empty poll worker slots.
- One large county sends a reminder letter to the local party chairs close to the election, listing the number of poll workers needed and where they are needed.

Offering a Split Shift Option

In This Chapter:

- **Benefits and Challenges of Offering Split Shifts**
 - **Tips**
 - **Tales of Three Jurisdictions**
-

Many people believe that the long days are a deterrent to poll worker recruitment. To help alleviate it, some election officials allow poll workers to work split shifts.

Split Shift Options (allowing poll workers to stagger shifts on Election Day) are complex and sometimes controversial. Although voters and poll workers express support for offering split shifts to poll workers, most election officials from large jurisdictions say split shifts are risky and too much work. Election officials from smaller jurisdictions say split shifts are invaluable. Split shift options are also more complex than one would think. Election officials need to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of offering and implementing split shifts.

Benefits.

- Split shifts means poll workers will be more alert.
- Many poll workers and potential poll workers are interested in exploring the option. It can be an important recruitment tool.

Challenges and Pitfalls.

- Poll workers may not show up to replace ones scheduled to leave.
- Split shifts could compromise the integrity of election processes (i.e., that the chain of custody will be interrupted.)
- Poll workers interested in splitting a shift may assume the election official will identify and recruit a partner for them.

Tips

- Make poll workers responsible for recruiting their own partner to work the other shift.

- Require split shift partners to split the paycheck as well as the shift in order to reduce the administrative burden of disbursing payments.
- To ensure accountability, implement a mechanism for tracking who is serving when at the polling place.
- Split shifts can complicate efforts to evaluate individual poll worker performance. For example, if two poll workers both administer provisional ballots – one in the morning and one in the afternoon – you need to have a mechanism for associating each provisional ballot application with the responsible poll worker.
- Where split shifts are allowed, the lead poll worker at a polling place must work a full shift for the sake of accountability and chain of custody.

A Tale of Three Jurisdictions

Jurisdiction One: (Notes from Virginia) “Split Shifts are Too Risky and Too Hard to Administer.” “Jurisdiction One” is a composite of the many large jurisdictions that have either attempted then abandoned split shifts for reasons listed above in Pitfalls and Challenges, or never tried the practice at all because of security concerns. The counties of Arlington and Charlottesville, Virginia, both tried to offer split shifts but found it was too much work without any clear benefits. Los Angeles County offers the split shift option but it is rarely used because interested poll workers shy away once they are told they have to find their own partner, split the poll worker stipend and remain in the polling place if their partner does not show up to relieve them.

Jurisdiction Two (Notes from Wisconsin): A Rocky Start. New Milwaukee Election Director Sue Edman experienced a challenging first election with a split shift option in her September 2006 Primary. She offered the option to 1,500 poll workers. Roughly 500 – mostly new poll workers – opted to try it. Then the election office was deluged with calls asking the election department to find the person to split a shift with. However, by the November 2006 election, things went more smoothly so that the election department plans to continue the program in the future.

Madison, Wisconsin, City Clerk Mary-Beth Witzel-Behl reports that half of the poll workers in her 76 locations are splitting a shift. She advises any election official seeking to pilot a split shift program “to give the public a chance to hear about it and give it more than one election to get the word out. Additionally, develop technology that supports what you’re trying to

accomplish. Another tip: Don't allow all poll workers to split a shift — we required a minimum of three all-day poll workers to be present from open to close, including the Supervisor.”

Jurisdiction Three (Notes from Vermont): “Split Shifts Ensure Fresh Faces and Smooth Operations.” In the districts around and including Burlington, election officials have experimented over the years with different shift lengths that work best. Each town has a local election authority called the “Board of Civil Authority,” which is made up of the Town Clerk, three or five Board members or members of the City Council and five to 15 Justices of the Peace. This helps get the word out that it is everyone's responsibility to assist on Election Day. In addition, it helps with many questions about split shift duties.

We also make it fun to attend the 1 1/2 hour regional workshops we provide around the state prior to the elections (with at least one workshop within one hour of each town). We hold them from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., so the elderly can attend and still drive home before dark. Many of the clerks encourage all the poll workers to attend and they will drive together and stop for a light supper first.” Kathleen DeWolfe, Director of Elections and Campaign Finance, Vermont Office of the Secretary of State)

Hard-to-Reach Communities

In This Chapter:

- **Challenges with Recruiting in Hard-to-Reach Communities**
 - **Strategies**
 - **Statutory Frameworks for Recruiting**
-

Election officials often say that recruiting poll workers from the jurisdiction's economic extremes is especially challenging. To learn more about poll worker recruitment in hard-to-reach communities, the EAC convened a roundtable discussion of 14 election officials from jurisdictions across the country. Most of the officials represented large cities or counties and identified a variety of characteristics of hard-to-reach communities present in their jurisdictions. Several participants identified a pattern of vacancies over several election cycles in precincts that exhibit:

- Extreme poverty or extreme wealth, and sometimes both.
- Have highly mobile populations.
- Are over-represented by one political party in the registration lists.
- Often require bilingual poll workers.

Recruiting challenges include:

- Some states require that poll workers reside in the precinct, city, county or state they would serve, thereby hindering availability.
- Difficulty keeping poll worker teams politically balanced, the degree of difficulty depending on the jurisdictions' laws, policies and political culture.
- Poor recruitment lists and lack of management tools make it difficult for election officials to gather data for assessing the skill sets and performance of poll workers in the poll worker pool and of new poll workers.
- Difficulty of persuading potential poll workers to travel beyond their neighborhood if needed
- Difficulty of compliance with the Voting Rights Act, especially in recruiting bilingual poll workers.

Strategies:

Election officials use a variety of creative approaches to overcome recruitment challenges in hard-to-reach communities. Many use multiple strategies to chip away at their recruitment goals, but no one was able to identify a “silver bullet.”

Many utilize local regulations governing the composition of poll worker teams. Others, who have run up against rigid rules, have sought legislative remedies. Still others have forged strong working relationships with other public agencies – for example, traffic control, public schools, community college, mayor’s office and county commissioners – to facilitate poll workers. Some have raised the bar on training while also building a sense of “insider” and community among the poll workers.

Other strategies:

- In jurisdictions of rigid residency requirements or political party balance problems, officials have used voter registration rolls to send targeted recruitment flyers. Depending on the precinct, the flyer might emphasize the stipend, the training, or civic duty to motivate people to respond.
- Jurisdictions with county residency requirements enable officials to recruit people willing to travel outside their precinct to serve. Some officials then provide transportation from a central location or additional stipend to cover travel costs.
- Consider offering additional monetary incentives. In some cases, offering an additional bonus to a local voter might entice that person to serve. In other cases, offering a significant amount of money to an existing poll worker who



is willing to travel to the hard-to-recruit community has proven effective as a short-term solution.

- Some officials consider educating policy makers on the difficulty of recruiting and placing poll workers within existing legal requirements and proposing more flexible requirements.
- Coordinate school and election calendars so that schools are closed on Election Day. Schools can thus be polling places and teachers, staff, and high school students can be recruited to serve as poll workers.
- Seek assistance from community leaders such as church pastors, school administrators, teachers and union representatives. Ask them to recruit a number of skilled poll workers from their group. (See Chapter 6 for more information)

Case Study:

Motivated by a transition to a new voting system, one jurisdiction came up with a plan to turn around its chronic lack of high quality poll workers. Building on their own connections, election office visionaries aggressively reached out to the community leaders — church pastors, school district administrators, city managers and union organizations. The results are as follows:

- High level staff met with 20 church pastors and provided each with a challenge to recruit skilled poll workers from among the congregation. This was followed up with messages in the church bulletin and from the pulpit. It resulted in 400 new poll workers.

Section 5: #33: Detroit, MI skill set

- Election officials met with the CEO of the Detroit Public School system to discuss the possibility of recruiting teachers as poll workers. The CEO not only agreed to support the effort, but he also issued a memo to all of the system's teachers as well as an email blast. This effort resulted in 400 more poll workers.

Section 5: #34: Detroit Public School memo to teachers.

- Election officials met with the local UAW and requested assistance seeking poll workers with a stated skill set. This effort brought in 150 to 200 poll workers.
- The Detroit Mayor's office was supportive and issued an email blast to the 8,000 city employees encouraging them to serve.

“We are already working to sustain these successes and that is the key. For example, immediately after the election we designed certificates of appreciation for our pastors and we delivered them in person in front of the congregations. Demonstrating this personal appreciation to the gate keepers makes a big difference.” (Daniel Baxter, Office of the City Clerk of Detroit, Michigan)

- Hire recruiters from specific hard-to-reach communities who are connected to local churches, schools, universities or community organizations such as the neighborhood association, tennis club or local tribal organization.
- Develop relationships with local media, such as community newspapers (often given out free), newsletters and list serves to publicize service opportunities.

Adaptation:

Some jurisdictions with particularly hard-to-recruit communities have developed Election Day plans that include dispatching specialty poll workers to the critical vacancy areas. Such specialty poll workers can include city or county poll worker employees who are familiar with the area or who are willing to be deployed working on the “buddy system.”

Tracking the Challenges and the Strategies:

Track the level of poll worker vacancies in the weeks before the election and on Election Day to assess the impact of strategies and/or advocate for funding to take strategies to a new level.

Statutory Frameworks for Poll Worker Recruiting

As if the task of recruiting poll workers weren’t difficult enough, state laws sometimes impose additional constraints on those who may serve on Election Day. The results of a survey of state poll worker requirements conducted for the EAC in 2006, however, suggests local election officials have some discretion and flexibility in meeting these requirements.

The following discussion of legal requirements and how they may affect poll worker recruitment, training and retention offers tips on how to work within these constraints. In some states, local election officials may want to consider joining forces to lobby for loosening the rules.

Requirements and Recruiting

Three requirements likely to create impediments to specialty recruitment strategies are:

1. Requirements that the poll worker be a registered voter either in the jurisdiction or the precinct where he or she serves.
2. Requirements that the poll worker be at least 18 years old.
3. Requirements that poll workers be affiliated with and/or nominated by a political party.

Residency Requirements

According to research on state requirements conducted by EAC contractors:

“Approximately 30 states have statutory preferences for poll workers to be residents of the precincts in which they work... Only one state, California, allows any state resident to be a poll worker anywhere in the state. Only six states [Arizona, Alaska, Colorado, Maryland, Minnesota and Virginia] will allow any state resident to be a poll worker anywhere in the state if there are insufficient numbers of county residents available.”

Residency requirements not only reduce the size of the pool of potential poll workers, they can undermine the effectiveness of recruiting notices such as public service announcements or newspaper ads that may reach an audience living in other jurisdictions. If people take the time to respond to an ad only to find out they are not needed, they will be less likely to respond to subsequent recruitment notices.

The following practices can help address this challenging requirement.

- If you are considering specialty outreach programs, such as working with corporations or civic groups, educate your partners at the outset about residency and other requirements.
- Keep a list of which precincts need poll workers and publicize these needs in any broadcast messages or advertisements. Volunteer recruitment experts say that citing specific needs, e.g., the number of poll workers needed for a specific polling place or neighborhood, will improve the response rate.
- Implement in-precinct recruiting methods. Such methods include training poll workers to ask voters to consider becoming a poll worker, posting a sign-up sheet in the precinct, or mailing a special recruitment notice to voters in those precincts.
- Add special positions to your poll worker operation such as precinct technician, troubleshooter or rover that are not precinct-specific. These positions allow you to bring in well-qualified volunteers and enhance the operation.

“Approximately 30 states have statutory preferences for poll workers to be residents of the precincts in which they work... Only one state, California, allows any state resident to be a poll worker anywhere in the state. Only six states [Arizona, Alaska, Colorado, Maryland, Minnesota and Virginia] will allow any state resident to be a poll worker anywhere in the state if there are insufficient numbers of county residents available.”

Age requirements

Some states stipulate that only registered voters may serve, which automatically prevents citizens under the age of 18 – notably, all high school students – from serving. Many jurisdictions have created special poll worker positions to work around this prohibition. And a number of election officials are pushing legislation that would eliminate this requirement.

Party affiliation or nomination requirements

In some states, state law requires the political parties to nominate or designate poll workers. Deadlines for this nomination process can range from 20 to 90 days before the election. In some cases, state law specifies the date by which nominations must be made. The closer the nomination deadline is to the election, the more difficult to manage the logistics of poll worker administration effectively. There is less time to process their applications, enter their information into a database (if there is one), perform background or screening checks and communicate with them about training. A late nomination date also means many poll workers will likely miss training.

State law requiring an equal number of poll workers from each party in the polling place presents multiple challenges. Corporations or civic organizations may not feel comfortable asking their employees or members to identify their affiliation publicly. Poll workers often recruit their friends to serve with them, which may lead to “partisan imbalance.” And some jurisdictions may be heavily tilted to one party.

- As with strict residency requirements above, if you are considering specialty outreach programs, such as working with corporations or civic groups, educate your partners at the outset about party requirements.
- In jurisdictions where the nominations are made close to the election, consider training methods that allow for flexibility, for example, a take-home video or DVD, or consider developing an online training course.
- Consider adding non-partisan positions to your poll worker operation that will allow recruiting outside the party nomination process. Non-partisan positions might include student poll workers, precinct technicians or bilingual translators.